



ACTION MAN

HOW ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER CONQUERED THE UNIVERSE.

■ BY TIM LEE

During the 80s a new breed of action star arrived on the world's big screens. Not so much a hero as an invincible superhero straight from the pages of a comic book, this was the walking embodiment of the old adage 'might is right'. The crux of his argument was an uzi, his conversation consisted generally of witty bon mots slapped on the end of violence like exclamation marks. He was the Terminator, the Barbarian, the Austrian Oak, Schwarzenegger. Or as the world would come to know him: Arnie.

He knew what action audiences wanted and he delivered.

"There are a hundred rules for playing a hero" Schwarzenegger told *GG's* Alan Richman in 1990. "Never blink your eyes when you shoot — you look weak if the noise makes you blink. If you want to show power and anger convincingly, never move your head when you say your lines. John

Wayne never moved his head. You can only move your lips; that shows you are ballsy. Show no emotions: You're above emotions. Never skip or hop; you must sprint or take powerful strides. When you are going up or down the stairs, never look at the stairs. When you are loading a gun, do not look at the gun. Look at the victim. Practise a hundred times so you can reload without looking. Every gesture has to separate you from the rest of the bunch if you want to play a stud."

Born on July 30th 1947 in the small Austrian village of Thal, just outside the town of Graz, Arnold and his older brother Meinhard were raised by their disciplinarian Police Chief father, Gustav, and mother, Aurelia. Not only were the boys made to exercise rigorously — 200 knee-bends before breakfast, Schwarzenegger once boasted — but essays would have to be written after every family field trip.



Bad Cop.

As an escape from his overbearing father, Schwarzenegger sought to define himself — physically and psychologically — in the gym. Though bodybuilding competitions were viewed as little more than a narcissistic oddity with strong shades of homoeroticism, Schwarzenegger pursued his goal of becoming the best built man in the world with single-minded determination. When his father only allowed him three trips to the gym per week, Arnold built his own gym at home. When he found the gym closed on Sundays, he smashed a window and broke in to work out.



Water fall.



Life is but a dream.

CHARACTER QUOTES

"Blood is rushing into your muscles, that's what we call 'the pump'. Your muscles get a really tight feeling, like you're going to explode. It's as satisfying to me as coming is, you know, as having sex with a woman and coming."

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, *PUMPING IRON*

"Crush your enemies, see them driven before you, and to hear the lamentation of the women!"

CONAN, *CONAN THE BARBARIAN*

"I'll be back."

THE TERMINATOR, *TERMINATOR*

"Let off some steam, Bennett." [After having killed Bennett by throwing a steaming pipe through his stomach.]

JOHN MATRIX, *COMMANDO*

"If it bleeds, we can kill it."

MAJOR DUTCH SCHAEFER, *PREDATOR*

"I'm not into politics, I'm into survival."

BEN RICHARDS, *THE RUNNING MAN*

"You're fired." [After having shot his double-crossing wife dead.]

DOUGLAS QUAID, *TOTAL RECALL*

"It's naht a toomah!"

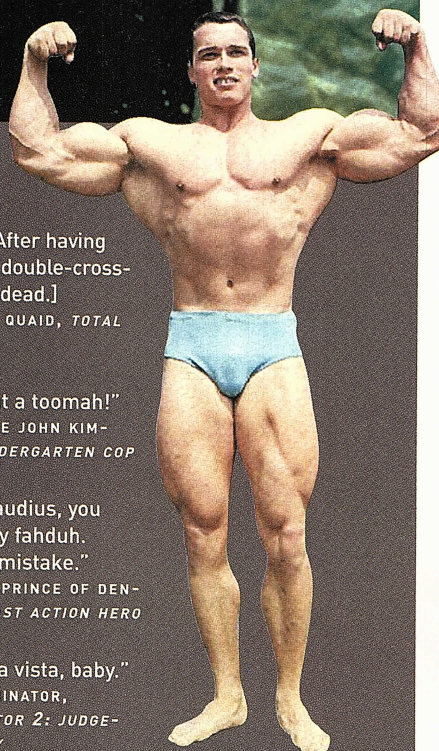
DETECTIVE JOHN KIMBLE, *KINDERGARTEN COP*

"Hey Claudius, you killed my fahduh. Biiiiiig mistake."

HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK, *LAST ACTION HERO*

"Hasta la vista, baby."

THE TERMINATOR, *TERMINATOR 2: JUDGE-MENT DAY*



In 1965, during his mandatory military service, an 18-year-old Schwarzenegger went AWOL to compete in the Junior Mr Europe competition in Stuttgart, Germany. Exhausted after travelling through the night and with only the clothes on his back, Schwarzenegger went on to win with a perfect 300 point score — a feat never before achieved. Returning with his trophy, he was arrested climbing back over the barracks fence and jailed for 7 days, after which he was hailed as the company hero and ordered to continue his weights training.

After this Schwarzenegger left Austria for Germany and London, finally arriving in the States in 1969. For him it was a land of opportunity. As well as dominating the international bodybuilding circuit throughout the 70s, winning the Mr Universe title seven years running, Arnie became a millionaire before he was 30 through real estate investment and a successful brick-laying business. He met and fell in love with Maria Shriver, a member of the Kennedy clan, in 1977. He was also quick to establish himself as a staunch Republican.

"When I came to this country I was in heaven," Schwarzenegger told *Playboy* interviewer Joan Goodman in 1988, "because Richard Nixon was President and Reagan was governor of California. I said 'This is great. This is right up my alley.'"

Financially and politically secure, Arnie set off to pursue the goal that had driven him from the beginning — to become a major Hollywood star.

"Acting was an enormous challenge for me," Schwarzenegger said after his initial 1982 *Conan* success. "In physical competition I'd had to learn to keep my emotions under control. To discipline myself against my emotions. You almost have to build a wall around yourself, guard against your own feelings and the feelings of those around you, too, because lows or highs, coming at the wrong times, can negatively influence how you perform. Well, of course in acting it's exactly the opposite. You have to be sensitive to yourself and to those you're working with. Stay open. Keep your defences down."

Before *Conan*, Arnie had met both laughable failure in *Hercules Goes Bananas* (1970) and promising success in Robert Altman's *Stay Hungry* (1976). This role earned Schwarzenegger a Golden Globe for Most Promising Newcomer, but he knew the traditional thespian's path could only end in disappointment.

As his acting coach from *Staying Hungry*, Eric Morris, "[Arnold] said to me 'You know, Eric, I don't really want to be the kind of actor you train people to be. I'm interested in action, adventure; I'm not interested in digging down that deep or taking that route.'"

After the massively successful documentary *Pumping Iron* (1977) brought Schwarzenegger to the attention of a wide movie-going audience, it was only a matter of time before Hollywood found a vehicle for him. *Conan the Barbarian* (1982) was tailor made. It relied on stony-faced masculinity and physical bulk — a combination that

would define his screen persona. He was an unstoppable force. He was every superhero made flesh and blood. Impossibly muscled, bluntly goodlooking, seemingly unfettered by intellect or moral qualms other than the most basic wrong-righting, and naturally attracted to violence.

As *Conan* director John Milius described it: "Arnold is the Nietzschean man. There's something wonderfully primeval about him, harking back to the real basic foundational stuff: steel and strength and will."

But if *Pumping Iron* introduced him, and *Conan* set him on the path, it was James Cameron's 1984 sci-fi blockbuster, *The Terminator*, that really delivered Arnold Schwarzenegger to the world. Though initially set to play the hero, Arnie and Cameron knew, contrary to popular opinion, that it was the villain who'd steal this show. Schwarzenegger turned massive fire power into massive star power as the unstoppable cyberdyne model T-800 and introduced his most famous line to cinematic culture. "I'll be back."

After this, buoyed by his own keen knack for self-publicity, Arnie reached a critical mass that turned him into the action star of the 80s. He had struck on a persona perfectly tailored to his own strengths (muscles, steely-eyed glares, action) and weaknesses (talking).

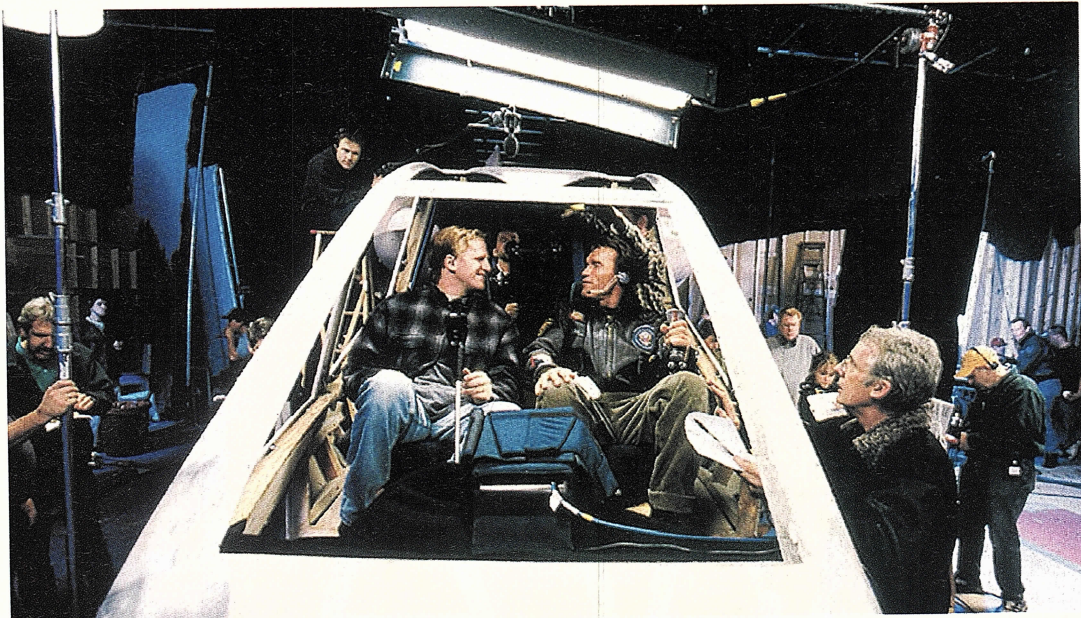
But this suited Schwarzenegger perfectly, for whom action, by necessity, had always spoken louder than words. As his voice coach Robert Easton recalled "[Arnie] was raised in a rural community, and so when he went into Graz they would laugh at his accent because he had this rural hillbilly dialect. Then he went to Vienna, and everyone there laughed hysterically because he had the Graz dialect. So then he went to Munich, and all the sophisticated Bavarians laughed hysterically at his Viennese dialect. Finally he told me, 'I came heeah and effrybody laughed!'"

But if anything, the strong teutonic accent only helped to establish him in the minds of American audiences as a new breed of hero. During the heady days of 80s Reaganomics and seemingly unstoppable profit, he was the unapologetic Übermensch playing out America's hidden fantasies.

"In action films where you do the action yourself you can't always show emotion," Schwarzenegger explained. "I think the majority of people out there appreciate that. They like to be able to disconnect emotions and go after what they want to go after, destroy what they want to destroy. That's why they go to see those films. It's a fantasy."

A violent fantasy that was exactly what 80s audiences craved and Schwarzenegger delivered better than anyone else in Hollywood. He had a natural attraction to the absurdly violent and *Commando* was a prime example.

"In one scene I chop a guy's arm off," he explained. "So, when we're filming it, the stunt man does something not in the script — he starts to scream. Well, I got the idea to tell him to shut up and slap his face with the arm I just took off. They thought it was too much. I thought it would be fun. I went to the studio head to argue over including the scene in the film. The guy was in shock. He



Above: In the driver's seat.

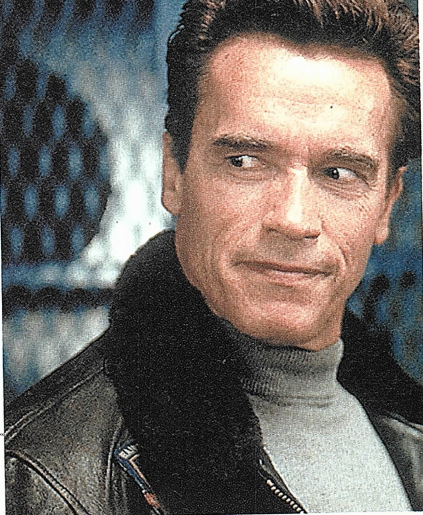


The prey.

BODY COUNT

Film	Kills
<i>Commando</i>	100
<i>True Lies</i>	65
<i>Total Recall</i>	49
<i>Predator</i>	47
<i>Raw Deal</i>	30
<i>Last Action Hero</i>	29
<i>Conan the Barbarian</i>	27
<i>Conan the Destroyer</i>	27
<i>Red Sonja</i>	26
<i>The Terminator</i>	22
<i>The Running Man</i>	15
<i>Red Heat</i>	8
<i>Kindergarten Cop</i>	1

He'll be back.



said it was a sick, stupid idea, that no one's ever done it before. I told him that was precisely the point: to do something that hadn't been done before."

But Arnie wasn't alone in his pursuit of bloody excellence. Sylvester Stallone, who Schwarzenegger initially credited with smoothing the way for muscle-bound heroes, had scored great success with his pumped up patriot John Rambo. Schwarzenegger's highly developed sense of competition, honed during his domination of the international bodybuilding circuit, was soon ignited.

"Stallone uses body doubles for some of the close-ups in his movies. I don't. One, my ego wouldn't let me. And two, I don't need a stand-in because there's nobody around with a better body than mine. We probably kill more people in *Commando* than Stallone did in *Rambo*, but the difference is that we don't pretend the violence is justified by patriotic pride. All that flag-waving is a lot of bull — we're all in the entertainment business. And if killing is done with good taste, it can be very entertaining indeed."

Schwarzenegger found sci-fi the perfect medium for his brand of ultra-violence for its own sake. In *Predator* he led a crack platoon against an extra-terrestrial on safari. *The Running Man* and *Total Recall* cemented his image as the unstoppable hero muscling his way through a dystopian future.

In the 90s he met once again with spectacular success (*Terminator 2*, *True Lies*) and even more spectacular failure (*Last Action Hero* lost \$100 million and nearly bankrupted a film studio).

In recent years, Schwarzenegger's star has waned. But even while rumours of his plans to run for Governor of California run rife through Hollywood, Schwarzenegger remains determined to keep his box office currency in that town. It's fitting then that, testimony to his 80s successes, he's reviving the characters that brought him success. *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* is currently in pre-production, while John Milius is working on a script for a third *Conan* instalment. It seems the he'll always be there to say: "I'll be back."

Conan the Barbarian S.E. and *Conan the Destroyer S.E.* are currently available as part of Fox's *Action to the Max* catalogue. *Predator S.E.* is due June 5th.